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ABSTRACT

This Child Development Associate (CDA) training module indicates the values of craft activities with clay for preschool children. Classroom activities as well as instructional objectives for the CDA intern are provided. The module emphasizes (1) reasons for using clay in the preschool program, (2) types of clay and clay-like materials, and (3) ways to use clay successfully in craft activities for preschool children. Resources for further study are listed. (Author/RH)

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Competency Based Training Module #32

CLAY

by

Cheryl Foster

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NOTE TO THE INTERN:

This CDA training module has been prepared as a guide for you and your CDA advisor to help you to develop certain practical skills necessary for your work in an early childhood center. Although it contains many useful ideas, it is not intended to be a self-study program. Many decisions about your training experiences are left up to you and your CDA advisor. The activities given in this module are "suggested" activities, and should be used if they are appropriate to your learning needs. You or your advisor may come up with other activities more appropriate for your particular situation, children, or background of experience and training.

Your advisor will evaluate your performance in each of the objectives. He/she may do so right away on the basis of skills you already have, or he/she may evaluate you after you have done some learning activities, or both. If you think you already have the skills required by some of the objectives, you should ask to be evaluated right away. You may not have to do any activities for some of the objectives. You do, however, have to demonstrate the required skills for your advisor; you cannot just tell him/her that you have the skills. If your advisor has already observed some of the skills before you entered this module, he/she may check you off on those skills without further observation.

When your advisor has evaluated your performance in an objective area as satisfactory, he/she will initial and date that objective as complete in your copy of this module. When all of the objectives have been initialled, you have completed the requirements of this module and have earned credit. Keep this module as your permanent record of completion, and as a reference to use in your classroom.

As you can see, how fast you are able to complete this module depends on a lot of things: how much time and effort you can put into it; how much help your advisor can give you; how much experience and training you have already had.

The Arizona HSST/CDA program hopes that you find your participation in CDA a valuable and practical training experience. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have for improvements in the training program and in this module.

CLAY

CDA TRAINING MODULE #32

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This module relates to the following CDA Competencies:*

B. ADVANCE PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE
(see items 1, 3, 5, and 7)

C. BUILD POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT AND INDIVIDUAL STRENGTH
(see item 7)

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* for reference, see the Arizona HSST/CDA "CDA Assessment"

CLAY

INTRODUCTION

Clay is a favorite material for young children. It is one medium that they can use to express their feelings, and it provides sensory and manipulative satisfaction. Clay is a creative material that emphasizes process instead of product; the child can work with it continually--smashing, building, adding, taking away, forming, rolling, making impressions, and may enjoy himself thoroughly for a long time without ever making "something". Clay activities should definitely be a part of any preschool curriculum.

The purpose of this module is to provide information about the values of clay activities, types of clay, materials to use with clay, and to offer ideas for the intern to keep in mind for the successful use of clay in the preschool classroom.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENT

CDA Intern's Name_____

Date of Entry_____ Date of Completion_____

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT
1. The intern will demonstrate an awareness of the values of clay for the preschool child.	1. Read Section I of the Study Guide. List five or more ways in which clay activities are valuable for preschool children.	_____ date/initial
2. The intern will demonstrate the ability to obtain and properly store the kinds of clay materials most appropriate for his/her classroom.	2. Read Section II of the Study Guide. a. List places where you can obtain clay (be specific). b. Decide what you have and need in clay materials and make plans to obtain what is necessary to make the clay supply adequate. c. Properly store the clay that you have in the classroom and/or know how to store clay that you plan to obtain. d. Keep on file recipes for clay that you can make. e. Gather appropriate accessories that can make playing with clay more fun for the children.	_____ date/initial
3. The intern will demonstrate the ability to provide an appropriate place to work with clay and to set up suitable limits for its use.	3. Read Section III-A of the Study Guide. a. Provide the proper type of table for use as a clay table. b. Set limits for the children as to where it is to be put when they have finished using it.	_____ date/initial

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT
4. The intern will encourage a variety of ways to manipulate and use clay.	4. Read Section III-B, C, D of the Study Guide a. List ways that clay can be manipulated. b. Help the children discover the extensive possibilities of clay. c. List several individual children's preferences as to type and use of clay. How is it fulfilling their particular needs?	date/initial
5. The intern will demonstrate the ability to offer proper guidance and encouragement with clay activities, allowing the child freedom of process without the pressure of making some product.	5. Read Section III-E, F, G, H of the Study Guide. Advisor observe a. Does the intern sit with the children to encourage them and handle the clay as they do? b. When appropriate, does the intern guide a child to drain off hostile feelings through the use of large pieces of clay? c. Does the intern ask questions that challenge the child's thinking in relation to the work with clay? d. Does the intern avoid naming objects and making models for a child to copy? e. Does the intern make clay materials freely available for the children to use without adult assistance?	date/initial

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT
6. The intern will demonstrate the ability to help a child elaborate on and/or preserve a clay product he values.	6. Read Section III-I of the Study Guide. a. When appropriate, let a child paint his creation. b. Allow a child to take a valued product home with him.	date/initial
7. The intern will demonstrate an awareness of various special activities using clay, and the ability to carry out a special project, if such a project is appropriate.	7. Read Section III-J of the Study Guide. a. List any special activities (suggested here or other ones that you have discovered) that seem applicable to your classroom use. b. Outline a plan to carry out some special clay activity. c. Carry out activity and evaluate it with your advisor.	date/initial

CLAY

STUDY GUIDE

I. Reasons to use clay in the preschool program.

A. Children like to use clay.

1. They love to squeeze, roll, and play with soft, pliable materials.

2. Older children will also begin to explore clay in a representational manner and show interest in creating objects such as animals, simple containers, and people.

B. Clay offers a direct sensory experience.

1. It develops a sense of touch.

2. Children can describe how it feels and pat it and shape it.

C. A manipulative material such as clay is excellent for wrist, finger, and eye coordination.

D. Clay can be manipulated in so many ways and thus has extensive possibilities for children.

1. Pound it.

2. Press it.

3. Roll it.

4. Squeeze it.

5. Cut it.

6. Smooth it with water.

E. Clay as a creative material emphasizes the creative process, rather than the making of a product.

1. Any form the child makes can be changed again and again.

2. Do not try to persuade children to stop when they have made something, or to preserve an object if they don't want to.

3. Offer children the option of saving and preserving an object they value: "Johnny, it's almost time for lunch. Would you like to put the wagon you made on the window sill to dry, or do you want to put it back in the can with the rest of the clay?"

F. Clay offers an art medium through which a child can express feeling.

1. A child can use clay to express feelings for which he has little other language.

2. By squeezing and pounding clay, a child can "act out" hostile feelings in a way that is not harmful to others.

G. It is an inexpensive material to use in the classroom.

H. It leads to an appreciation of shape and form and for older children develops an appreciation of sculpture and pottery.

I. Clay offers advantages as a three-dimensional material.

1. It offers additional technical and cognitive challenge as a three dimensional material.

2. Some children are more at home with three-dimensional materials than with two-dimensional ones.

II. Kinds of clay and accompanying materials

A. Types of clay and clay-like material

1. Natural earth-clay

2. Powdered clay (will need to be mixed)

3. Prepared clay (costs a bit more but is a greater convenience)

4. Plasticine - clay with a bee's wax or vaseline base instead of water (will not dry or bake; becomes soft when warm and hard when cold)

5. Various kinds of dough

B. Storage

1. Clay is best kept in a crockery jar (ready for use when enough moisture has escaped to permit clay to be molded with the hands without sticking to them).

2. Clay ready for use should be kept in individual balls (punch a hole in ball with thumb and fill with water at end of each day to keep moist).

3. You can wrap clay in a damp cloth and keep it in a plastic bag in an air tight container.

4. Store dough materials in plastic bags or aluminum foil in the refrigerator.

5. You can use individual plastic bags labled for each child and re-use them from day to day.

C. Where to get clay

1. Dig it out of the ground. Ask a local potter to tell you where to find it and how to fix it.

2. School suppliers

3. An art store

4. Potters

5. Make your own-using recipes found below.

D. Recipes (All of these recipes will dry hard and permanent at room temperature. All except the "Sugar Dough" may be dried quickly in the oven (250°).)

1. Clay Dough

1 cup flour
½ cup salt
½ cup water
1 tblsp. alum (to keep from becoming sour)
2 tblsp. salad oil (to keep from sticking)
Add food coloring as desired — Resource #5

2. Salty Dough

1/3 cup flour
2/3 cup salt
1/3 cup water
Add food coloring as desired — Resource #5

3. Dough

1 cup salt
3 cups flour
½ cup water (add gradually) More may be added for watery consistency.
Add powdered paint or food coloring. — Resource #4

4. Muddling Dough

Mix Knead:

1 cup salt
1 cup flour
½ cup water

(Use more flour as needed to avoid stickiness)
Store in covered jar or wax paper in refrigerator.
Resource #2

5. Modeling Dough

Mix together:

1 cup salt
1/2 cup cornstarch
2/3 cup water

Cook and stir constantly until mixture thickens. Remove from heat. Cool; knead in vegetable coloring. Store in refrigerator.
Resource #2

6. Sugar Dough

Mix:

1 tablespoon water
2 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons flour
Add vegetable coloring. Resource #2

7. Clay Dough

4 cups of flour
1½ cups of salt
1 tablespoon powdered alum

With hands gradually work in the following liquid mixture:

1½ cups water
2 tablespoons salad oil
artificial coloring

Knead it as you would bread dough. Divide and place into 3 or 4 small plastic bags and store in air-tight container. If the clay becomes dry, crumble it into a mixing bowl and work in more water until it becomes the proper consistency. Resource #1

E. Extra materials to add to the fun

1. Rollers
2. Wooden hammers
3. Cookie cutters
4. Tongue depressors
5. Colored toothpicks
6. Water
7. Dishes
8. Sea shells
9. Extra flour (children like to sprinkle it on the dough-type materials)

III. Guides to the successful use of clay

A. Provide a suitable place to work with simple and clearly defined limits.

1. Cover the "clay table" with oil cloth or clay boards made from cardboard, linoleum squares, or squares of plywood.
2. If the children's hands are very sticky, use plastic pails of water or basins of water in which hands can be rinsed before being washed in the bathroom (too much clay in the pipes may be a problem.)

3. State limits for the children to help provide success: "The clay stays on the table." "The clay goes back in the crock when you are finished."

B. Enccurage a variety of manipulation and experimenting with the the material.

1. Pounding

2. Squeezing

3. Rolling

4. Twisting

5. Smoothing

6. Shaping

C. Encourage a variety of activities with the clay.

1. Some may use large balls of it; some may want to use small portions.

2. Some may want to just handle it with their fingers; some may prefer using tools with the clay.

3. Some may want to just manipulate it; some may want to create objects.

D. Be aware of individual differences in attraction to the type of clay.

1. By making clay wetter and thus messier, you may increase its value for some children.

2. Some inhibited children may be unable to touch clay at first if it is too wet and sticky; provide soft and moist clay until barriers against messiness have relaxed.

E. Sit with the children to initiate or encourage participation and conversation and to offer guidance when the children need it (to provide an encouraging and accepting environment).

1. Offer reassuring comments to build self-confidence.

2. Avoid naming objects unless the child initiates the idea; instead comment on shape, smoothness, roundness.

3. Feel the clay, pat it, and enjoy it as the children do.

4. When the need arises, show a child how to smooth out adjoining sections so that they don't break.

F. Challenge their thinking by raising appropriate questions such as those related to weight, balance, and three dimensionality.

1. "How can you keep those legs from falling down when there is something heavy on top?"

2. "What else could you do to help it stay together?"

3. "How does it look all the way around? We can see all of its sides."

G. Avoid making models for the children to copy.

1. The process, not the product, is our prime concern (it is valuable to roll the clay, pat it, and feel it without making anything).

2. When you make models for the children, you deprive them of the creative values in using clay.

3. An adult making a model will often discourage a child when the child realizes that he can't make one like it.

4. A child may drift from the activity, the meaning gone from the experience since it is no longer art or self-expression.

H. Make the clay available for the children's use without adult assistance.

1. After the children have become acquainted with clay and its possibilities, let them use it at their own choosing.

2. Observe and evaluate whether or not the children select it as an activity and if they seem to be enjoying their experiences with clay.

I. When a child has made something he values...

1. He may want to let it dry, paint it with tempera paint, or it may be shellacked, too. (This will not work with oil base, plasticene type clays).

2. It may be possible to fire the product. All types of natural clays and prepared water-base clays may be fired to produce permanent pieces. Ask a local potter to help and give advise.

3. It is encouraging and rewarding to the child to share such a work with the other children and adults in the classroom as well as with his parents.

J. Some special activities

1. Singing and working - Model with clay by squeezing the clay and rolling it into a ball between the hands and then into any shape imaginable. It's fun to sing while we work:

Tune: "Skip to M' Lou"

I'll roll the clay between my hands
Between my hands, between my hands.
I'll roll the clay between my hands
Into a nice round ball.

The children may make up other verses. Resource #1

2. Use clay as children "remember" what they saw on a field trip.

3. If natural clay soil is available, use it with water and let the children work with it (especially applies when clay is a part of the children's cultural background).

4. If it is possible, invite a potter to come and demonstrate for the children (it is a valuable experience for children to watch adults who have found in art a means of self-expression as they work with their favorite medium).

5. A person skilled in the use of clay may mold clay figures to go with a story that he/she is telling.

6. Have the children make their handprints in clay (the form may be used as a gift to parents).

7. If there are potters in your area who fire their pots in open fires, plan a special picnic and pottery firing. The pieces the children want to fire must be thoroughly dry, so they will have to make them several days before they are to be fired. Have the potter tell the children about the process and then carry it out. You will have to set careful limits for the children around the fire.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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3. Read, Katherine H. THE NURSERY SCHOOL: A HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS LABORATORY. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunder, Co., 1971.

4. Silverblatt, Iris M. CREATIVE ACTIVITIES. Cinncinnati, Ohio, 1964.

5. Steere, Caryl and others. INDIAN TEACHER-AIDE HANDBOOK. Tempe, Arizona, College of Education, Arizona State University, December, 1965.